



Affecting and spatializing future(s) among young entrepreneurs in the South Italy

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ABSTRACT

Predominantly set within the sociological framework, this essay focuses on the intersection dynamics between the construction of the future and the constitution of space in the case of young entrepreneurs from southern Italy. The analysis is based on thirty biographies of young people from three major regions of southern Italy: Calabria, Campania and Sardinia. For the most part, these young people have decided, after gaining experience abroad, to return to their birthplaces and try to develop their work projects. By exploring the continuous intertwining of temporalities that characterize their future, we highlight how the future is spatialized by exercising aesthetic reflexivity. The results also reveal the emergence of critical affirmative agency, opposing the prevailing narrative of presentism through constructing a multitemporal future conceived through the re-figuration of the spatial order.

1. Introduction

Since the late 1960 s, the development of techno-capitalism (Magatti, 2009) has produced a progressive acceleration of economic, social, and technological processes; as Rosa (2003) states, it speeds up the rhythms of life and contracts time horizons, leading to the domination of the short term. The consequence of living in a high-speed society is the appearance of a future that seems to fold itself into the present (Rosa & Scheuerman, 2009); a present that, in turn, extends from the past to the future as a single temporality (Leccardi, 2014).

In Italy, the construction of the future, influenced by the macro processes mentioned above, is amplified by some structural variables¹ that determine very high unemployment rates, especially in the south, both compared to that of young people residing in other European countries and adult generation and generations of young Italians of the past (Schizzerotto & al., 2011). Much sociological literature (Cavalli, 2007; Diamanti, 2007; Sgritta, 2014; Spanò, 2017) has focused on the consequences, at the biographical level, of

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¹ In 2022 in Italy, unemployed young people (i.e. those who actively sought work without finding it) accounted for 18% of the total (they were 22.3% in 2021), a much higher value than the Euro Area (11.9%) or from countries like France (13.7%) or Germany (5%). Only Spain and Greece have higher percentages (22.4% and 22.4% respectively). To this figure we must also add the share of young people who are neither employed nor included in an education or training course (NEET). In 2022, Italy with 19%, is the second country with the highest rate (just after Romania with 19.8%). Again, the value is very far from the average from the Euro Area (11.6%) and from France (12%) and Germany (8.6%). Basically, in 2022 in Italy, two out of every ten young people are looking for work but cannot find it and two others have completely given up. EU Labor Force Survey (EU-LFS). (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/lfsi_esms.htm).

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this cultural, economic, and social interweaving, demonstrating that the construction of the future is conditioned by the impossibility of coming up with life projects and setting long-term goals. Global processes and the rise of technical macrosystems interacting with the structural specificities of Italy have generated the paradox whereby a life project is subjected to two pressures: dynamic instability, at a macro level, which makes one perceive slowness as a limit to be overcome (Rosa & Scheuerman, 2009) and that of experiencing the effects of structural conditions, the lack of work first of all as feeling of having a blocked life (Musumeci, 2020). This paradox is at the root of a heavy exodus, which leads many young people to leave the country.

Although these problems are unquestionable, this article focuses on the attempts that the youngest put in place to respond to and control such constraints. We have adopted an 'actionalist' perspective (Touraine, 1992; Dubet, 2014) which looks at the possibility not only of verifying the conditioning of social structures and institutions but also of considering the experiences lived by social actors, and their emotions, their anxieties and hopes when they are confronted with the various events of collective life. This contribution can also intercept some directions of goal setting research in the field of professional psychology, in particular the role played by motivational and affective dimensions on career paths (Locke & Latham, 2002).

The principal aim of the article is to glimpse into the responses of young people from South Italy, where the unfolding of the future is not effortless and to catch every sign of a cultural change based on their choices and their social behaviour, which, as we will see, does not appear entirely in line with the above considerations.

The empirical material consists of 30 in-depth video interviews using a combined biographical approach (Bertaux, 2016) and narrative (Schütze, 2007). The group of interviewees consists of young entrepreneurs between 23 and 34 years old from the regions of Calabria, Campania and Sardinia in Italy. Mostly, they are graduates: thirteen with specialization and five holding a PhD degree. Most come from small inland towns, while others come from cities. Predominately, our interviewees have spent most of their training in other Italian regions and often abroad. All of them are engaged in entrepreneurial projects, working, and dealing mainly with agricultural innovation, recovering and enhancing local and cultural resources, promoting and supporting local development and businesses, creating rural co-living and co-working spaces, and fostering social and labour inclusion.

The 30 biographically structured narrations allowed gathering information regarding everyday life, time frames, space of action, preferences, projects, and strategies. We have thus been able to analyse an extended narrative corpus highlighting how temporality and spatiality constitute an inextricable weave. As we will try to explain later, although our informants are fully aware that a condition of general uncertainty hangs over their concerns, they express a vital reflexivity in building their future that connects self-production with the re-figuration of space (Knoblauch & Löw, 2017).

The video interviews were carried out during the pandemic. Despite the intrinsic limitation to the online interviews, they were conducted with minimal difficulties and having the chance to videorecord it, we are led to return and reflect, albeit marginally, on the visual performances.

1.1. *The social as interweaving of time and space*

Spatio-temporal categories within a sociological perspective are socially determined and sociologists have always been attracted by their inherent duality. As for the time, on the one hand, the structuring and normative character that time assumes in the organization of human activities, on the other, its subjection to individual interpretations. Consider, for example, how we transform temporal constraints into individual solutions (Tabboni, 2006). Looking at space, the same duality is perceived. In this sense, the contribution of Martina Löw (2016) is central. She focuses on the process of the constitution of space, both as spacing or arrangements of social goods and people, creating the distribution of materiality in a potential scene and an operation of synthesis through which goods and people are amalgamated. Perception, imagination, and memory are processes that activate spaces, or we could say, following Löw, they can refigure spaces into places or vice versa. Time and space are, therefore, temporalized and spatialized in the sense that individuals perform them.

From a sociological perspective, in lived and everyday worlds, time and space are inseparable (Crang, 2001; Dorsh, 2013; Frehse, 2020; May & Thrift, 2003). As Massey (2005) underlined, time and space must be conceptualized as interrelated processes working together rather than in isolation: spatial processes unfold in time, and conversely, temporal processes occur within spatial arrangements. Weidenhaus (2017) recently contributed to a more substantial connection between spatial sociology and biographical research. His work shows how past, present, and future relationships always occur with certain spatial constitutions. In the context of the research that refers to the adoption of a methodology that is also biographical-narrative (Schütze, 2007), he identifies different typologies of biographical historicity and the constitution of the living space. He shows that cases of a particular temporal type can always be ascribed to a particular spatial type. In the research we have carried out, we have not gone so deep, but we have nevertheless investigated how the temporality of the future is spatialized in a particular context such as that of the South.

We will explain the search results as follows:

(1) The interweaving of past, present, and future within the process of shaping the future, becoming its constituent parts: the past of the future, the present of the future, and the future of the future.

(2) The spatialization of a multi-temporal future. The coexistence of these different temporalities finds meaning in the refiguration of space (Knoblauch & Löw, 2017) and takes shape through a new arrangement of meanings and uses of the old spatial order.

(3) The presence of a critical affirmative agency (Rebughini, 2018) and traces of a new social aesthetic. Critical agency, imagination, and innovation allow our research subjects to produce new conditions, circumventing constraints rather than unmasking them. Imaginative tactics become a resource for designing change and establishing new forms of resistance, situated and contextualized.

We deal with points (1) and (2) in the next paragraph, while point (3) is covered in the conclusions.

1.2. Spatializing the future

Although the interviewees' life paths are highly singularized (Martuccelli, 2010), expressing personalized visions and narratives of the future, in almost all the cases, it appears that a multitemporal future is defined by the interlocking, overlapping leaps, cuts and stitches of the past, present and future. This is, in part, attributable to the narrative device itself. To name one, Ricoeur (1988) argues that the temporal order of events described in the narrative is simultaneous with constructing the necessity that binds them into a conceptual unity.

Nevertheless, considering our findings, the multi-temporality of the future has a mobilizing function in the sense that during the interviews, our informants tended to activate specific memories, reflexivity, and imaginaries to construct their future.

The future emerges as a composition and combination of different temporalities, which we have conceptualized as the 'past of the future', the 'present of the future', and the 'future of the future'. This combination emerges as an aesthetic reflexivity (Lash, 1993),² which indicates a reflexivity inclusive of the dimensions of sensitivity and affect. The analysis of the choices of our interviewees shows how they are oriented by an aesthetics of existence, which relies on intuitive, imaginative and affective dimensions close to their singularity. As we will see, the choice to return to the homeland, the desire for resonance and the consequent search for a new rhythm of life can be understood as different forms of aesthetic reflexivity, which involve relationships and influence the configuration of their future. Aesthetic reflexivity plays a role in countering an idea of the future that our interviewees described as hegemonic, centred on the present and dominated by the pressure towards mobility. A future which is intended by them as a product of the neoliberal culture³ that presents itself as a senseless pressure to gather productive experiences supported by the illusory imagination of freedom (Magatti, 2009). Our interviewees contrast this idea with a critical agency in which the future becomes oriented towards one's subjectivation.

According to the research findings, our interviewees contrast such a dominant future with the desire to stay and build a sustainable future, putting social relationships at the center of their futures. The concept of 'affective community' as a vital social nucleus, defined by Zink (2019), is appropriate. Such a concept should not be confounded with the Tonniesian distinction between community and society. Instead, it refers to sensory infrastructures of social encounters and affective exchange, from which the society originates. From this point of view, it is not related to regret and nostalgia but to the vitality of an embodied social life, which lies at the core of what today is defined as an affective society (Slaby & von Scheve, 2019).

As we will see in the next paragraph, the future filtered by this affective dimension is intertwined and spatially implemented.

2. Spatializing multitemporal future

As mentioned above, Löw (2016) states that the constitution of space results from the relationship between social goods and people, i.e., operations of spacing and synthesis that activate the connection of space and allow it to emerge. In our case, space is constituted in the multi-temporal future due to the operations of mobilizing and integrating three dimensions carried out by our subjects. These are the *affective*, linked to the memory of places and people; the *reflexive*, extended to the present events; and the *imaginative*, projected onto the future that one hopes will accommodate their aspirations. We used an analytical device to account for our results, distinguishing the temporalities that constitute the future and showing the relationship with space for each of them. Following Löw (ibid.), we focused on the operations of synthesis, which connect social goods and people and produce spatial quality and intensity. Below are the details:

- (1) *The past of the future* refers to the roots of the future and answers the question: where does the future come from? One organises the recovery of pre-existing symbolic elements and materials using the active force of memory. Memories activated by the places generate connections and a movement towards the future. As we will see later, the grandfather's house, the community, landscapes, and traditional tools and artefacts are examples of how this complex process of space refiguration occur.
- (2) *The present of the future* represents everyday life and answers the question: how is the future actualized? It is an everyday practice and, as such, the result of the action between constraints and opportunities. It restrains the mobilizing power of memory (Jedlowski, 2017), forcing it into an unstable present due to the precariousness of social conditions; on the other hand, it allows one to make choices and develop original and autonomous plans, despite impediments and issues. Our interviewees often describe this oscillating condition as the contrast between the material and social poverty of the land and its wealth of intangible resources or between low gratification from the outside and the strength of inner drive.
- (3) *The future of the future* represents imagination and answers the question: how does the transformative power of the future manifest itself? It contains the refigured space, which unfolds the new network of social goods and people. It is the result of a work of re-weaving, realized through imagination. Our informants redefine material and immaterial resources, synthesise them in an original way, and assign a new location and a different perspective to them. These are some examples: recovering a local agricultural tradition by creating a farm on abandoned family land; organising a festival in the village in order to bring it back to

² Lash's (1993); see also Beck et al. (1994); Lash & Urry (1994) conceptualization of aesthetic reflexivity is a more embodied version of reflexivity than Beck and Giddens's cognitive reflexivity.

³ We are aware that the term neoliberal risks becoming an 'umbrella' term (Le Galès, 2016) under which different meanings and interpretations converge. For this reason, we limit its use by adhering to the meaning suggested by our interviewees. The term neoliberal recalls the Foucaultian concept of governmentality (Foucault, 1979) as the device for structuring the space of possibilities for action and consensually conditioning social conducts.

its former life; transforming a drug alley into a cultural alley; building a network of businesses in depopulated areas, in order to increase social capital and promote tourism. Sharing, aggregation, proximity and belonging are the modes of action that qualify the refigured space, constituting strength, sources of motivation, and transformation levers.

2.1. *The past of the future and the space of memories*

The future is rooted in the past, absorbed through the body, and cultivated by thought with stories, words, images, gestures, landscapes, architectures, objects, and feelings. It manifests as the result of mobilizing memory, which propels the activation of space, forming a new connection between social goods and people. Symbolic and material elements are recovered and recombined to redesign the fabric of relations in the land and community. Our interviewees refigure space by linking elements such as a room, some photos, the family home, an ancient cultivation technique, the impervious paths of nature trails, traditional images, and words, etc. Many of them effectively describe the interaction between space and memory, like Ignazio, who lives in a small town in Calabria and is involved in territorial development and urban regeneration. In his story, the paternal grandfather is a predominant figure; the memory of the times spent in his house listening to his stories in a room with family photos on the walls generated a strong sense of recognition and belonging. In the present, the images of that past nourish the desire to recover its original vitality to transform it into the space in which to place one's future:

When I used to visit my grandfather, which was the room where we would talk, and in that room, he would tell me many things that fascinated me. I still remember him, and all these pictures hanging on display – representing a bit of his life and my family – fascinated me, so there is a story in that room. I always saw the village abandoned. No one lived there. Instead, I would get excited when my grandfather, or other old people, would tell me how full of life it used to be (Ignazio, Calabria).

As for Amelia, after spending several years studying and working in Italy and abroad, she founded a social promotion association that plans the development of rural areas in Sardinia. Running away from a place, she considered motionless and silent for a long time, she eventually came to perceive its movements and frequencies, realizing that it was the only space for a possible future. At that point, she quit her job to 'exercise the right to return'. In her words:

This is a photo I took in a wholly depopulated village in the centre of Sardinia. It is a half-open door of a dilapidated house, from which you can look inside and into the past. In my opinion, which is the idea upon which we founded our association, we must never abandon our ties and our roots. Look at the future, but always with an eye to the past, and what has been (Amelia, Sardinia).

The past of the future activates an aesthetic reflexivity as a sensory openness to the 'external effectuality of social goods' (Löw, 2016, p.164), which is the whole of their properties, the stimulation which is not limited to sight alone but extends to the overall atmosphere, including hearing, touching, and smelling.

Lino works as a nature tour guide and devotes himself to rediscovering and appreciating Griko, the Greek language of Calabria. His great childhood passions were walking in the Aspromonte woods and ancient Greece. Through extensive and immersive use of his perceptive resources, Lino recovers these passions, cultivates, and transforms them into elements of new spatialization:

I took out of the drawer the things I did as a child. Both as a guide, with the walks, and the hobbies I have. Even as a child, here in Aspromonte, I used to go walking like crazy, wandering around, finding hidden places, and my friends would say to me: "why don't you take me with you? In short, I was a guide even before I knew it (Lino, Calabria).

And:

When I saw the Acropolis and the Parthenon, after hearing so much about them at home, it was the best day of my life, 27th of April 1999. I wrote this when I was nine years old. The best day in life, not just mine but everyone's (Lino, Calabria).

The aesthetic reflexivity of these interview excerpts is directed towards the past, actualized in the present and projected into the future. For some, it resides in the distant past of childhood, for others, in the near past of adolescence, or even in the more recent past of university and early work experiences. The extent of one's geographical and emotional distance from the past can also influence how the process of constituting space changes. For example, Rosa, who owns a project to repopulate marginal inland areas of Calabria, could observe from the proper distance the place and the life she had decided to flee from by taking a trip to America, overturning the perspective that had hitherto oriented her choices. Thus, she chose to return and live in Calabria, starting from her family home, family, and community:

It all started with me showing pictures of my family's house to people in America, the simplest, poorest details, which seemed almost a symbol of cultural poverty before economic poverty, and them telling me how beautiful it was and why I would want to leave such a place, and me suddenly asking myself why I did so. Then I put myself in their shoes and wondered if I was seeing the things from the wrong perspective (Rosa, Calabria).

Rosa considers herself as a *repentant former fugitive*. She eventually has found the reasons for coming back and does not regret her decision.

2.2. The present of the future in the contingent space

The future is traversed, but not dominated by the present. For our interviewees, it is still possible to establish a point of contact between experience and the search for the future. Dependence on the present is not absolute, in the sense that it does not prevail. The narration of one's future is present in all the interviews, presenting itself above all as a line of the horizon (Jedlowski & Pellegrino, 2021, pp. 148–161), which includes implications, uncertainties, and gaps. Our interviewees perform transformative actions that are different from everyday routines. These actions, being still performed at the individual level, are not enough to produce relevant changes of spaces (L ow, 2016). Indeed, they perceive the need for change, but precarious working conditions force them to negotiate with the constraints of the contingent space. These general conditions raise uncertainties and hopes, entailing an inevitable risk that one eventually decides to face. Morena, a young woman from Cosenza, prefers a dynamic and open-ended perspective to the idea of a fixed job and spending her days in an office. Her choice increases her uncertainty towards the future but induces her to accept it as a fundamental emotional resource:

There's one constant, don't do the same job all your life, so, not according to the old concept of work, you know, I took the job at the post office, hello, my life is over, I will sit in that chair forever. No! The idea of knowing what is in store for the next twenty years terrifies me. Some of this uncertainty is good for my spirit, but at the same time, I tell you, I don't even know how to answer to it because everything is so uncertain (Morena, Calabria).

It is the same for Vera, who gave up post-graduate studies in the United States to embark on a career path in Calabria, a start-up company that deals with social inclusion. She describes her state of uncertainty with an image of contrasting lights and shadows:

[describing the image she brought with her] *There is a house with a street lamp on it, because I feel this longing for home, for a Mediterranean identity, to be southern, to be secure, but tied to the land, solid and rooted in me. I will carry this bond with me into the future. With the street lamp lit, preventing total darkness, I feel a push towards hope, something positive, but I still perceive it as uncertain, as something that does not yet give me full security (Vera, Calabria).*

In the present of the future, the decisive move is to bring the past into the present to project both temporalities into the future. Putting this insight into practice amounts to a radical, everyday challenge, translating into the choice of 'restanza'. The concept developed by the anthropologist Vito Teti (2019), does not denote a lazy and unconscious immobility, but a creative and dynamic act. 'Restanza' is therefore equivalent to the choice to remain in one's land, dictated by the conviction that only by relocating oneself within that relational dimension will it be possible to set a course for the future.⁴ Viviana's words perfectly express the profound sense of this choice:

I started to live a completely new life, to experience my city, my land, and this led me to previously unknown places and people. I felt an intense desire to create something of my own in a place that held special meaning for me. Here, I felt that I could be myself, I felt that I could find that missing piece, and I felt that my happiness would be achieved more easily in Catanzaro, Calabria, than anywhere else, where I would probably be a speck among many (Vera, Calabria).

Remaining is a challenge that requires the engagement of all available energies, with a twofold objective: 'to resist the erosion and dissipation of the present' (Teti, 2019, p.25) and to create new imaginaries that open cracks and escape lines. Taking care of the existing space while preparing to create an entirely new one is mediated by 'resonance' (Rosa, 2019), a model of one's relationship with the world in which the world (or a specific segment of it) is experienced as something that is responsive and therefore is not silent (Haugaard, 2020).

Guido, from Calabria, a founding member of a tourism network, told us about his experience of resonance, recognising that only a sensitive relationship and a close bond with the world in which he lives will allow him to redefine its space and himself within it:

By deciding to stay, you understand the precarious position of those who remain in a difficult land like Calabria, or in the South. One must invent or reinvent oneself, without severing, or rather strengthening, the link with one's land, country, and community (Guido, Calabria).

We find the same attitude with Corrado, from Sardinia who started a rural co-working and co-living space:

Most of the people who work with me have come back after years of living away, and we all want this kind of life, a sustainable world, because we want to live in nature, maybe with the internet, to keep in touch with the rest of the world. We like good food, we like to be able to have a vegetable garden and to deploy our skills from years of study and work, without having to leave (Corrado, Sardinia).

This constitutive characteristic of resonance makes contingent space both a constraint and an opportunity. The former comes from all the difficulties despite which one decides to stay, such as the mafia, bureaucracy, inadequate politics and institutions, and the social environment, which is sometimes prejudicially hostile and little inclined to accept innovation. Our interviewees do not complain about these obstacles and difficulties but accept them and try to overcome them daily (Mandich, 2020). The latter, opportunity, is the possibility of continuing to make room for oneself in complete autonomy, following a positioning map to find new directions for one's daily challenge, and generating new spaces.

⁴ Recently, the 'want to stay' has been placed at the center of an interesting investigation (Membretti & l'Italia, 2023) because the phenomenon seems to be expanding.

Gianni, a Sardinian who has returned after spending a long time as a professional in China and is now a partner in an alternative land development agency, sums up this balancing act and the goals it allows to be achieved in the following way:

Having a future here means that I am fully aware that I am giving up many opportunities that I could have had on the other side of the world. But my reasoning is simple: if I have to work with something I don't like, financing a development model that is not me. I do it somewhere in the world for money. (...) If I have to come back here, it may be a sacrifice, but I need to work on something that can give me a vision of a happy future. Many of those who leave do so out of desperation, so there is no real choice. Our goal is not to bring people back but to give them a new choice (Gianni, Sardinia).

2.3. The future of the future and the space of imagination

This is the future that reshapes space through imagination and related practices. It is multi-temporal, containing previous phases and unfolding them simultaneously. Its roots are in the past and its actions in the present. Several interviews provide us with descriptions that are dense with the future. Sonia, a community manager of a Sardinian cooperative that deals with territorial transformation and active citizen participation, told us:

I don't like to think about the future, I want rather to imagine the path of the future. So, the image of the future, for me, is what we are doing now. The future corresponds to the desire we put into the present. The future is a path that starts now; we do not know where it will take us. But it exists and is already happening. The future for me is making the past and the future coexist (Sonia, Sardinia).

According to Lino:

If you put the future in a box, you will never open that box. So, I am more inclined to think that the future starts now. The future is a walk, a hike, but it starts with the first step. Perseverance and passion will lead you to take the next steps (Lino, Calabria).

The future does not concern something that will happen but something that is happening now. It is a daily interaction between different temporalities, a tension that mobilizes memory, perception, and imagination. From this perspective, one can witness the emergence of a new relational sensitivity, which reshapes one's relationship with temporality and spatialization, transforming them from external systemic elements into ways to connect. Our interviews reveal an embodied configuration of the space-time dimension, more in tune with the rhythm of the subjectivation. We introduce here the term 'rhythm', referring to the concept of rhythm analysis developed by Lefebvre (1992), whereby 'the regulated rhythm, governed by rational laws, is replaced by the less rational rhythm of getting in touch with the body, the carnal experience of living' (Lefebvre, 1992, p.80). Our interviewees can perceive a new rhythm. For Corrado:

Regarding the debate between the countryside and the city, I am a fervent supporter of the countryside, and consequently I see the future in villages, because I see a rhythm of life. If stimulated, people could live a happy future there. They could work and, at least as far as places like Sardinia are concerned, they would not necessarily have to emigrate to build a life (Corrado, Sardinia).

For Annapaola, however, this rhythm coincides with a different speed in the time, which allows her to live out her dreams and which also coincides with the reason that brought her back to Sardinia:

Time in Sardinia is relative. Perhaps it flows differently, in the sense that I realize I can do many things, whereas when I worked for a company, I did nothing besides work, which scared me. Every time I returned to Sardinia, I realised I had a lot of time for everything. The slow passage of time was what I needed, and it led me to decide to return to work here, where the dreams of others do not absorb people (Annapaola, Sardinia).

Performative spatial actions mark these different temporalities. The combination of space and future requires facing a new direction, which implies performing operations of arrangement and synthesis that refigure space. Many interviewees describe this phenomenon as an epiphany of the gaze, by which space is re-discovered, re-listened to and re-figured. These operations of synthesis are described as looking at old things and old lands with new eyes, hybridising tradition, and innovation, making visible what has always been invisible, bringing back to life a reality that has never ceased to exist, closing the circle and reinventing one's relationship with space. The Calabrians, Guido and Rosa provide examples of such synthesis, one emphasising its indispensability, the other its decisive naturalness. Guido explained:

We decided to enhance what our native land could offer regarding natural attractions: sea, beaches, hills, villages, and mountains thirty metres from the sea, offering visitors a chance to discover and experience the authenticity of places and people. These activities must be supported, encouraged, and nurtured because they are probably the only way. We are convinced of that (Guido, Calabria).

According to Rosa:

I returned to my parents' home in Calabria, my only resource, so I thought I would start from there, from a philosophy degree, and my parents who are full of passion. I connected the dots and decided to create a co-living initiative, and thus this residential incubator of personal and entrepreneurial projects (Rosa, Calabria).

In addition to a new outlook, the future needs actions. In this case, the constitution of space depends on the inclusion of the conditions determining its change. It thus becomes a political choice because it produces a political space, one of resistance and action to the inefficiencies of the political and social system, to the tearing in the civil fabric, and to the weakness of collective action.

This is exemplified in Marianna's story. She is a journalist and member of an anti-Camorra (Neapolitan mafia) association, who was born and raised in a small town in Campania. Marianna knows well the negative space of the mafia and opposes it with a radical choice, building a counter-space of legality and emancipation with her actions:

I was little, my grandfather came to pick me up from school. He was holding my hand when the right-hand man of the village boss threatened him!! This is the very emblem of immorality and illegality. In 2018, I joined the youngest anti-Camorra association in Italy. We were assigned two properties confiscated from the Camorra. The children attend drama classes, storytelling courses, and other activities free of charge. The properties are located in an alley known as drug dealer alley. We decided to redevelop the whole alley and the best thing is that the children now say they live in the "alley of culture" (Marianna, Campania).

Lastly, we come to the narrative of the future. Many of our interviewees referring to the future report about spatialised actions. Their words express resistant reflexivity, reveal the micropolitics of existence, and create new imaginaries, all condensed through space. Here we have Antonello, a young man from Campania who started a community farm:

The future is the ability to occupy the interstices to take those resources that are little considered by most and create a relationship between them. For me, the interstice is the space between things, which we do not usually see, and which could instead become relational space. Resources that are usually not exploited can be set into action by relating humans and materials (Antonello, Campania).

According to Gianni:

In my vision of the future, we strongly question our current model of development, and how we consume and produce, reconsidering values that are currently being lost, including them in the political debate, such as the rule of law and environmental sustainability. This way, we could recover a connection with the world around us, which we are devastating, and with science and all the values that come from equality (Gianni, Sardinia).

Finally, according to Lino:

We need to know each other. Otherwise, we will all become the same. Diversity generates encounters, and so we seek out and offer this diversity that characterises southern Italy. If we don't, we will forget what happened on this earth. I believe we should find a connection with the land. It might be useful not to make every suburb the same, with McDonald's and shopping centres. The future must somehow reflect the past to avoid making everything flat (Lino, Calabria).

Wanting to summarize what emerged from the vividness of the extracts from our informants, we are witnessing an active resistance to what are considered the effects of neoliberalism.

Our informants express a reflexivity that enhances the affective dimension of existence. Time and space are subjectivation oriented, and the subjectivation is through the affective community. The difference concerning the past that we also read between their words is the rise of an affective paradigm that produces a new articulation between space and place. The place of origin, previously perceived as unusable concerning the construction of one's future and abandoned for the abstract space of globalization, mobility and collecting experiences, is given a new meaning. It became a life project's beating heart and unfolding their future. Memories and the community are reinvested in a new imaginary, setting themselves as mobilizing forces for creating futurity space.

Therefore, as Martina Löw (2016) suggests, space is not a container but a significant horizon, to be also understood as an 'atmosphere' constituted by the subjective experience of material things. It is in the relationship between the subjects and the disposition of already established social goods and people that space is activated. If 'spacing' arranges social goods and people, creating the distribution of materiality in a potential scene, it is the mobilization of memories, perceptions, and imaginaries which, by linking people and goods, create space. As she states, the symbolic components of an action situation make possible institutional arrangements condensed into space models.

3. Conclusions

In this article, we have explored futures narrated by young entrepreneurs from southern Italy. In the first place, the futures that emerge from the narratives are constituted through continuous and complex interviewing of different temporalities. Therefore, each future comprises a past of the future, a present of the future, and a future of the future. The second finding regards the spatialization of these futures, which translates into the tendency to create a correspondence between the multi-temporal future and the processes of re-signification and re-figuration of space. In more general terms, we have witnessed the rise of an affective and embedded future manifested as a form of symbolization of space. Indeed, the interviewees creatively spatialize the futures, while the motive for this action could be linked to the concept of resonance proposed by Rosa (2019). In a resonant relation, the subject and world affect each other and are reciprocally transformed. Therefore, resonance is a synchronic vibration and tuning with the world. What emerges is, therefore, the future as an affective state (Adam & Groves, 2007; Adkins, 2017; Berlant, 2011; Coleman, 2017) that confuses the linearity of time in the sense that the future or the past is not experienced as separate phases from the present but experienced within this. Let us closely examine the interviewees' tendency to subjectivation, along with their choices and practices. We can discern a collective narrative that goes in the direction indicated by Rosa. In fact, for the most part, our informants have discarded the neo-liberal narrative of acceleration and mobility after adhering to it. Instead, they oppose it with the search for resonance, for example, by developing individual entrepreneurial projects positioned within the environmental and social sustainability framework. By doing so, spaces have become places in the sense that they 'become the presumptions and the result of space-related actions' Löw, p. X) (2016).

They express an affirmative critique (Rebughini, 2018) based on the new practices of space appropriation. According to Rebughini,

affirmative critique is a contingent and situated critique, more oriented to circumvent obstacles than to unmask the constraints and control devices. It is a critique generated by the search for the new. Instead of denial and rejection, it is a critique expressed as an ethics of existence (Foucault, 1988; Vatrella & Serpieri, 2022). This affirmative logic is expressed also through the tendency towards local communities perceived as affective places (Zink, 2019).

The research leads us to hypothesize the emergence of a new spatial-temporal perspective, allowing us to intercept a new rhythm substantially dissimilar to the neoliberal discourse. The critical activity of young entrepreneurs is strongly imbued with relationality, which reframes temporality and spatiality by relying on the mediation of a new corporeal and relational sensitivity. The perception of rhythm occurs through extensive and intense use of the body and the perceptive sphere, which produce a form of identification with qualifying elements of space, such as landscapes, communities, stories, and knowledge. Like rhythm analysts, our interviewees perceive an asynchrony between time and rhythm in their experiences, speaking out for a cultural order different from neo-liberal rhetoric. The concept of rhythm, as Lefebvre understood it, recalls spatialized times and, at the same time, temporalized spaces. Along with Deleuze and Guattari (1980), we are dealing with territorialization that is not only rhythmic but also melodic and generates entire landscapes. The link between rhythm and territory does not only lie in the encounter between spaces and times but depends, more specifically, on the energy and intensity invested in the action.

The new rhythm, which resounds in the spatialized future, comes with the already-mentioned affirmative creation of new practices. Rebughini (2018) argues that the result is a contingent critical action rooted in everyday tactics but capable of looking beyond. The emergence of what today is the paradigm of sustainability depends on the institutionalization of these actions, which concerns putting in place favourable policies that support it.

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CRedit authorship contribution statement

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The data that has been used is confidential.

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